Korea

THE WORK OF THE PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN'S MISSIONARY SOCIETIES OF KOREA

The opening paragraph in the History of the Woman's Missionary Society of Pyengyang, published in Korean a number of years ago, reads as follows: "The Scripture says that to give to others is better than to receive and Christians are commanded to preach the Gospel to those who do not know it. This is the precious responsibility given by the Lord's command."

With the above thought and object the Woman's Missionary Society of Pyengyang, the first in Chosen, was started Feb. 20th, 1898, and in 1908 became a fully organized society. Four women met to start the work and Mrs. Ni Sin Hang, the first woman Christian in Pyengyang, became the first president of the Society. Each member was asked at first to give one sen, and evangelists were to be sent to different places. Other women met and agreed to the plan. This was the small beginning of work which has accomplished so much in evangelistic work of Pyengyang district and in other places as well.

The women who have gone out through the years have endured hardship, seen idols and devil worship paraphernalia destroyed and women and men become sincere Christians. Faithful

Christian workers have developed among them and churches have been started as the result of preaching the Word and the blessing of the Lord upon it.

In 1907 when the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Korea began work in the Island of Quelpart and a pastor was sent as a missionary, this society sent a woman evangelist to work, and she remained four years. Several churches were started and again a missionary woman was sent for more work.

After the Korean church started missionary work in Shantung Province, China, the Society contributed one thousand yen for a missionary residence for one of the Korean missionaries.

In connection with the Pyengyang work there are three Presbyteries and in each Presbytery a woman's Presbyterial Society. Before the organization of the Presbyterial the women of the western Presbytery had a very active missionary society. At the time of the spring class for country women on an appointed evening the Western Anju and Pyengyang Presbyterials have their separate meetings and on another evening they meet in one union missionary service. All three Presbyterials contribute toward the work of the General Society.

In Seoul the first missionary society was organized about twenty-two years ago and the Presbyterial about twelve years later. There are thirty-three societies in the Presbyterial. A campaign is in progress for evangelistic work in the unevangelized counties of the district. A fine home mission church has been started in one county. Posters, planned to encourage the societies to work for specific objects to promote spiritual growth, are being used in the Seoul district and have been adopted for use in other districts also.

Twenty-six years ago in the Syenchun district a group of women were led to form a missionary society and said "Let us go and preach" and they also began to raise money to send out workers. A class was held at this place and women who came from other places heard of the work the Society was doing and went back to their home churches and started other societies. They sent a pastor to preach in Manchuria and through the years other workers have been sent to different places. The missionary society of the Bible Institute chose an utterly unevangelized place about six miles from town and students go out from the Institute to work there. A church has been built and about forty adults and forty children are in attendance.

The Presbyterial Society of the Taiku district was organized in 1925. There are about two hundred societies in this district. The missionary programs, which are now used in many of the societies throughout Chosen, were started in Taiku about 1919 and are still being prepared and sent out from there. The missionary societies in churches under one pastor are organized into one Society. The contributions are put together and a Bible woman is employed for as long a time as the money will permit. The women of the Presbyterial have also contributed to toward the support of a worker among Koreans in Japan.

Taiku has been somewhat historical in the organization of missionary society work and this will be referred to in other paragraphs.

At Chungju the Presbyterial Society was organized in 1930 and there are thirty-two societies. Each year a contribution is sent to the General Society. Plans are being made to provide a Bible woman in the province. A trip was planned in the interest of missionary society work. The missionary and Bible woman spent two nights at each place; the society met in the day time and evangelistic meetings were held at night. The society members do personal work and some societies have the plan of using every Saturday especially for this work.

The Chairyung Society was organized in 1921. There are forty-four church societies which contribute to the Presbyterial Society and individual gifts come from other churches. Miss Kim Ho Soon, the president of the Presbyterial, was sent by the General Society to work in connection with the work under General Assembly of Korea in Shantung Province, China.

The Presbytery has given to the women of the Presbyterial Society of Chairyung a small parish, to care for. There is a pastor there in charge of four groups.

In the Andong district the first missionary society was organized in 1928. There are about fifty-two in the district. Some of the societies have united in helping some of the weaker churches. The three societies in Andong unite in an all day district meeting. Letters from the missionary in China are received and copies sent to the country churches. When the big class is in session an all day missionary meeting is held.

The first missionary society in Kangkei was probably organized about 1910. There are eighteen societies which pay into the general fund of the Presbyterial. This society has been instrumental in starting church groups in several places and they have one church building in a place up in the mountains. Two members of the Presbyterial

went to visit a number of these church groups, the society paying travel expenses, the groups furnishing the food, etc., and the women giving their time freely.

At Sinpin in Manchuria the missionary society dates back seven years. They have given their contributions to the local Presbytery to help out with the salaries of the men evangelists. In the past some of the country churches have also had societies which have helped the Presbytery in their evangelistic work. Two years ago when Korean Christians were going through so much hardship in Manchuria, this Sinpin society sent the generous sum of thirty-five yen to the treasurer of the General Society.

In the above sketches of missionary society work in the districts of the nine stations under the Northern Presbyterian Mission, the General Society has been referred to frequently. This General Society is the organization representing the missionary work of the women of all the Presbyterian churches united in the one General Assembly in Korea, the Australian, the Canadian, the Southern Presbyterian and Northern Presbyterian churches. A meeting of the society is held once a year a few days before the meeting of General Assembly and delegates are sent from the Presbyterial Societies.

A number of years ago it was realized by some that the women should know more of, and come in closer contact with, the missionary work being conducted by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian church in Korea. A suggestion was made that the women from different societies be allowed to sit in the room when the Board of Missions met and hear reports and hear plans discussed. The request was granted and the women listened in and received information. This was done several times.

At Federal Council time, women missionaries from different missions met and those especially interested in missionary work began to think and talk over plans for a General Missionary organization feeling that there would be strength in numbers and that more real work might be accomplished and more real help given to the work of the General Assembly's Board. There was correspondence over plans. During one vacation time others met, discussed constitutions of missionary societies in the homelands and planned and received advice from a brother missionary well versed in church law.

Korean women and missionaries worked together and tentative plans were made. Shortly after, in 1927, an overture was sent from Taiku to the General Assembly asking that General Assembly consider the plan for having a woman's General

Missionary organization. This request was granted and a committee continued to work over plans.

In 1928 when General Assembly met in Taiku, the General Society was organized and the constitution sent to General Assembly for approval. It was intended from the beginning that the General Society would work in close cooperation with the Foreign and Home Mission Boards of General Assembly. Where Presbyterial Societies had not yet been organized it was urged that such organization be made.

In 1931 Miss Kim Ho Soon was sent by the General Society to work in Shantung Province in China in connection with the work being carried on there by the Foreign Mission Board of General Assembly. Besides supporting Miss Kim Ho Soon the society is also supporting a woman missionary in Manchuria who works among the Korean people there.

At the meeting held last September, delegates came from twenty Presbyterial Societies of the twenty-four Presbyteries under General Assembly. It was reported that there are missionary societies in 661 churches and a membership of 9,638 women. The women contributed last year ¥ 5,593.06; of this amount ¥ 1,307.34 was given over to the General Society for the support of their missionaries. The societies of the Presbyterials are doing work in their own churches and districts.

As yet many societies are not fully organized and the women have much yet to learn concerning the object and work of missionary societies and how to conduct their meetings, but the women are working and learning year by year. It is a real pleasure to see them conduct their Presbyterial and General Society meetings. The three things kept before the General Society women are first prayer, second personal work in their families, villages and cities, and, third giving of money to send others to preach the Gospel.

The women of the Presbyterian church in Korea are a very real help in making the Gospel message known to others.

This year, which marks the 50th anniversary of the beginning of work in Korea, brings causes for thankfulness among which may be mentioned work being done by the women of the churches.

Will you, who may read this leaflet, pray that the women of the churches in Chosen may continue to be even a greater help and blessing in future ?

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